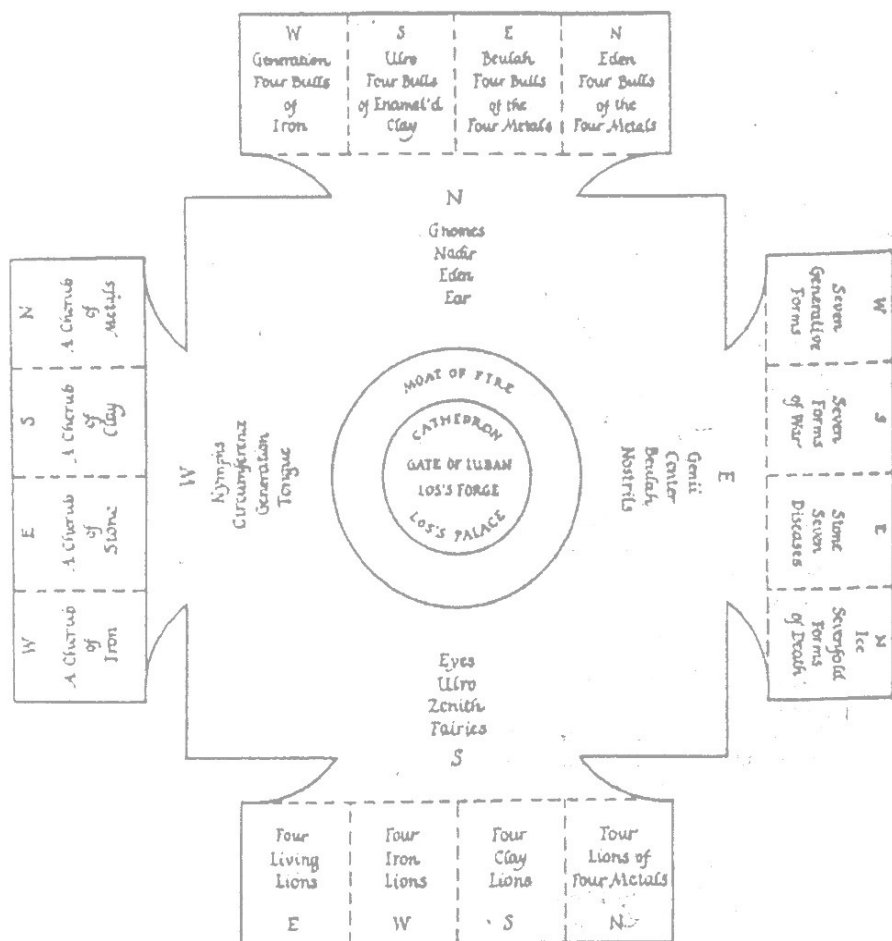


TWO CITIES

On Carcosa and Golgonooza



Olchar E. Lindsann

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“ He views the City of Golgonooza, & its smaller Cities:  
The Loo

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ears:  
Permanent, & not lost not lost nor vanishd, & every little act,  
Word, work. & wish, that has existed, all remaining still  
In those Churches ever consuming & ever building by the Spectres  
Of all the inhabitants of Earth waiting to be Created:  
Shadowy to those who dwell not in them, meer possibilities:  
But to those who enter into them they seem the only substances  
For every thing exists & not one sigh nor smile nor tear,  
One hair nor particle of dust. not one can pass away. ”

-William Blake, *Jerusalem*.

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I

Urthona dreams Carcosa: city of shadows, where flesh is a form of focus, where the Unbodied need not await creation. Here the movement of absent thought evokes the very strings that tremble at its vibrations, sinews forth those who are not subjects bound to form, becoming that shall not become. A boundless city fashioned with an unthinkable architecture, Carcosa is *not*, a polis of aporiac interiority: it has no outside, city without the Other, city of the other, profane sanctuary of the Yellow Sign.

Nonetheless Carcosa is riddled, with lacunae: a labyrinth of divergences, unbound by dialectic, a cityscape of play, inexhaustible plethora of others who are not *outside*, but *other*: who exist. Women and men of meat, of death, of specificity—they cannot enter, but *pass through*. Led by their nerves, they follow those of its circuitous canals which reflect their own impulses, and with their words they speak to those whom chance draws out from the city's maelstrom of spontaneous activity to match their own desires; and whatever they see within Carcosa are also, precisely, the loci of delicate collapse into which the city disappears—collapses into detail, into contingency, into the Real, what exists *as such*. They encounter new lives that emerge from seams where present consciousness, in its specificity, meets some perfectly complementary avatar of imminence, shaped by chance. Such is the faculty of imagination: a drawing forth from imminence, unfixed to immutable *form*. So they are carried along, compelled by specific desires that call up their virtual echoes from the ceaseless mass of

potentials and negations; in this way they find their paths through the city—that is, they *think*. They name this passage dream when they are carried on its current; they name it madness when they swim. Like lepers, they shed their skins and vanish.

But in Golgonooza, there is tragedy. There Urthona is not known.

Estranged across the lake of Hali, the cities watch each other. Carcosa peers within itself to find the gates of Golgonooza gaping, fourfold by two, elemental, heavy with bodies and parting flesh. Golgonooza gazes far across the liquid lake, region of watery snares and seductions, wreckage of all speech, beyond which Carcosa waits, distant, silent.

As if into a mirror, Golgonooza faces that city of imminence, Carcosa; as with a mirror, the one is not identical to itself, and floats, a phenomenon free of matter; the other opens up behind itself a depth of space and time, of contingency and limit. Thus, there is a question posed by those who do not exist: whether *we* are woven from images of the material world, from the material of words, or whether we are centres, nodes, around which convergences accrete, congealing into the real, into matter, into time.

Blake ventured into Golgonooza, this teeming land of sighs and tears and smiles, thronged with shadows, in which the ground slips into mist. Here, there is nothing positive, but a chaos of potentials—multiple but not discreet, imminent but not apprehensible, or

apprehensible only by means of fleeting avatars not identical to themselves. They swarm, in a choratic upsurge, an unthinkable reflex to which subjectivity cannot lay claim, as if they were the only substances, their density painful in the course of its escape. Los, Urizon, Ahania, Enitharmon—all burgeon forth orgasmically in confusions of images and flesh. And this upsurge, Blake sings, is also a falling away. Golgonooza and what *is* suspends between two voids, eternities, and what *burgeons* forth is also *voided* forth, emptied, invested in the inaccessible Real, encrusted with form, like an exhaled breath that turns to ice when it strikes the air. Those snared in Golgonooza are betrayed by their nerves.

The body analyzes this activity, this excitation and tension fluent in its subtle transference, with precision—the body turns away from those internal elements eroding all foundations, atom-clogged images of unfounded Carcosa; it turns toward the world, an earthquake-shudder of muscles sinews bones, instrument of displacements. Its posture is a superimposition of desires and denials. Golgonooza is a liminal city, a metropolis of the nerves, a bustling necropolis in which entities and subjects cleave and jostle with manifest abandon. Populated by images, the city seethes and trembles to a panoply of traces: memories and wishes, possibilities and repressions, every species of virtual activity that leans against the skin of *becoming* breathes and acts here, in swarming constellations of detail which await disembodied, the key that will *draw together*, on numberless filaments, a subject who shall soon ensue from objective reality, localized in the wilderness of matter.



“ven is the totality of the images of the material world, with the totality of their internal elements. But if we suppose centres of real, that is to say of spontaneous activity, the rays wh

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ts them. There is nothing positive here, nothing added to the image, nothing new. The objects merely abandon something of their real action in order to manifest their virtual action—that is to say

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e analyzed with increasing precision by the body, our past psychical life is there: it survives—as we shall try to prove—with all the detail of its events localized in time. Always inhibited by the practical and useful consciousness of the present moment, that is to say, by the sensori-motor equilibrium of a nervous system connecting perception with action, this memory merely awaits the occurrence of a rift betw”

-Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*.



II

Open to the Other, Golgonooza bleeds into the world that is its wound. City of rifts, of departures, of identities severed and dispersed. Beyond its boundaries lies the body, the world that Is, inhabited by fixed subjects, inhibited by consciousness, by the present, which shoves itself against the city's walls and penetrates its fourfold gates, two-fold. Golgonooza does not mediate between imminence and existence so much as it registers and codifies the anguish of their non-identity, the scandal by which this dichotomy is established and experienced. Through its gates the living pass both in and out, carrying on a traffic of the nerves, trading perceptions for absences, for memories, for nonexistent things that have survived, awaiting the turning-away that will establish a reality to which they cleave: a gap in the Real that they might fill. The advent of Pain is the memory of Carcosa.

So in this game of modulations and probabilities beyond or prior to any mathematics, some trace of far Carcosa, infrathin, persists, a germ of absence percolating through the real. And so it is that *other* subjects speak—not from a centre, but from Carcosa, city without a *place*—speech from silence, speech without a centre, whispers of the Yellow Sign. They have passed through Golgonooza, dread conduit of thought into the world, suspended in the place of cleaving, erected on the plain of death. Outcast into presence, they flit unknown between the strands of consciousness from which the world is bodied forth. Thus Carcosa, that which was never established, is reduplicated, its absence re-

inscribed across the script of the Real: that phantastic city, like its dark twin Golgonooza, is coterminous with the world that it refuses. One traverses the world and its other in a single indivisible movement, which does not equal itself and which de-centres every possible equivalence.

From imminence to matter: thus Blake retraces the movement that links Golgonooza, city of origins, to the world of death and tears. Yet between the sinews of groaning Golgonooza, Carcosa silently withdraws, prior to every origin, and yet unestablished, negating priority itself. The roads through Golgonooza lead many ways.

The infection of Carcosa—a parasite, it reads and marks its marginalia on the Real, where it fringes into Thought and scission: the tortured streets of Golgonooza. From that dark city's gates, wracked in agony, imminence is hacked up, doled out, hounded into form, constrained, embodied in the movement of death, in thrall to Urizon, the spectre of individuation through death, which alone shall return imminence to itself, stripped of reality, of detail, self-identical at last. Yet, this is not all. There also issue from its gates furtive, unfixed subjects without bodies, nearly fictive, mobile, formless, nomad, fluid, their lips sealed with the Sign that lovingly conceals Ahania's gift, flocking to the trees whose boughs twist *just so*, inhabiting the chair or the air that persists *precisely there*, emit words whose resonances awaken, obscurely, thoughts which continue to withhold the speech that pronounces only synonyms for death. The dead and unborn flutter in our midst,

between our every impulse, riding our desire. Within existence, these absences persist, emotionally charged, agents of conception which nonetheless remain unconceived: emissaries of the Yellow Sign, words behind which subjects shall continually accumulate and re-form.

Outcast amidst matter, these emissaries find their way. The Real is riddled with lacunae: a labyrinth of convergences bound and enclosed within dichotomies, it nonetheless hides an invisible terrain of play, coterminous with its own certainties and foreclosures, objects of externality to which internal elements and non-existent desires might respond and adhere, both *other* and, in fictive virtuality, alive to what exists. Women and men of fantasy, born of unfixed thought, court specificity despite its whiff of death—they cannot inhabit the external world, but *pass through*. Led along the nerves of those who *are*, they follow the eddies of the real, adapting their elastic desire, their breaths condensing into words that ring along the edges of thought, burning like acid or joy into the consciousness of those who exist, wretched children of Golgonooza. From the world of limited phenomena, they weave themselves into dolls of thought, and fashion masks from the memories and wishes of those condemned to Live within the world of Urizon; and whatever their hosts or lovers see of them—insinuated in the world's interstices—are also, precisely, the loci of delicate collapse into which the World created by Golgonooza disappears, swallowed into the microcosm, vacuum of the Yellow Sign.

As Breton intuited, the denizens of Carcosa swarm among us, unfixed,

unformed, alert to every detail of objective reality, which now and then, impelled by some unimaginable vagary of chance, supports them like a mirror danced across by inverse images, those lying glances, traces perceived without substance. In Golgonooza, the city of detail, where desire meets the world—is it, as Blake insists, from imminence that we shadow forth through pain to end in meat? Or does objective Detail abandon some of its real action, yielding to what is *not* necessity, to that trace of Carcosa which has always already disappeared from reality's absent centre, yielding to the desires of the shadowy city in which the uncreated and every thought and wish and sigh persist, wondrous amalgams, vertiginous as sleep? Most precisely is this question posed: a quick curve of the jaw, a shifted weight, impulse of the nerves subsumed and shifted to a wrist opened like a flower to the semiotic thrust of language, rendering speech superfluous as thought itself.

Their lives emerge anew at each encounter with the external word, these absent, unfixed subjects who accumulate themselves around the perceptions and actions of the real, in its specificity, who become avatars of imminence inhabiting the imprints of the real, shaped by chance. So they are carried along, compelled by specific desires that call up their virtual echoes from the ceaseless mass of potentials and negations; in this way they find their paths through the Real. They name this passage madness when they are carried on its current; when they swim they name it dream. Like incubi and succubi, they come to us in menace or in joy, and vanish, leaving nothing but an empty Sign.

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